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# Identity Invalidation among Multiracial Individuals: Do the Identities of the Source and Target of Invalidation Matter?

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Claremont McKenna College

Identity Invalidation among Multiracial Individuals: Do the  
Identities of the Source and Target of Invalidation Matter?

submitted to  
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by  
Lauren Calogero

for  
Senior Thesis  
Spring 2019  
29 April, 2019

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Identity Invalidation among Multiracial Individuals: Do the Identities of the Source and  
Target of Invalidation Matter?

Lauren Calogero

Claremont McKenna College

### Abstract

Previous research has indicated that racial identity invalidation has negative effects on multiracial individuals. Using a 2x2 mixed factorial design, this study investigates the effects of who does the invalidating (between subjects: Ingroup A vs. Unspecified Outgroup) and which of a multiracial individual's strongest two racial identities is being invalidated (within subjects: Racial Identity A vs. Racial Identity B). Participants were 65 multiracial individuals recruited via social media to complete an online Qualtrics survey. Participants' levels of psychological distress and identification with their strongest racial group were measured after they read each of two racial identity invalidation scenarios. We found that multiracial individuals reported higher levels of distress when the source of invalidation was an ingroup member belonging to their strongest racial ingroup and the basis of invalidation was the shared racial identity. Additionally, controlling for baseline racial group identification, multiracial individuals reported lower identification with their strongest racial group when the source of invalidation was an ingroup member belonging to their strongest racial ingroup and the basis of invalidation was the shared racial identity. Therefore, it is not necessarily the source or basis of invalidation that matters, but rather the interaction between them – racial identity invalidation only has negative effects on multiracial individuals when the identity of the source of invalidation matches the racial identity being invalidated.

*Keywords:* multiracial, mixed-race, identity invalidation, racial identity

### Identity Invalidation among Multiracial Individuals: Do Identities of the Source and Target of Invalidation Matter?

The 2000 U.S. Census was the first Census that allowed U.S. citizens to select more than one ethnic/racial group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Currently, the U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates Program estimates that the “Two or More Races” group in America is around 2.7% (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts). However, Pew Research Center suggests that the multiracial population may actually be closer to 7% based on the ethnic/racial background of a person’s parents and grandparents (Pew Research Center, 2015). Additionally, the multiracial population is the fastest-growing ethnic/racial demographic group in the U.S., with a projected 2018-2060 growth rate of 176% (Frey, 2018). Although the multiracial American population is growing so rapidly, the field of multiracial studies is still relatively new and small. The present study aims to contribute to this growing field of research by examining a phenomenon termed ‘ racial identity invalidation’ in more detail, looking at the specific factors that affect the consequences of experiencing racial identity invalidation.

#### **Racial Identity Invalidation**

Racial identity invalidation has been defined in many different ways by researchers, but most simply it is when others deny an individual’s ethnic/racial identity (Franco & O’Brien, 2018). Franco and O’Brien (2018) identify several types of racial identity invalidation, including phenotype invalidation (denying one’s ethnic/racial identity due to physical appearance, such as hair texture, skin tone, or facial structure), behavioral invalidation (denying one’s ethnic/racial identity due to one not behaving like

a “typical” member of that ethnic/racial group, including language ability or cultural knowledge), and identity incongruent invalidation (denying one’s ethnic/racial identity by assigning them an ethnic/racial identity that differs from their own self-determined ethnic/racial identity).

Racial identity invalidation is one of the most prevalent racial stressors for multiracial individuals and has been shown to have many harmful effects on mental health and general well-being (Franco & O’Brien, 2018; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). For example, experiencing racial identity invalidation has been linked to increased suicidal thoughts and rates of suicide attempts (Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Franco & O’Brien, 2018) as well as damage to one’s self-perception, self-esteem, motivation, and psychological and physical health (Coleman & Carter, 2007; Franco & O’Brien, 2018; Nishimura, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009). Additionally, experiencing racial identity invalidation can threaten group identification, lead to struggles with racial identity, and lead to a sense of racial homelessness, meaning that multiracial individuals can feel as though they do not belong with any racial group and/or that they do not have a sense of identity (Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Franco & O’Brien, 2018). This sense of not belonging to a specific racial group or any racial group is quite common among multiracial individuals. Past studies suggest that some of the major factors that determine how much identity conflict and loneliness a child feels in regards to their racial identity are how well they are prepared for facing prejudice and how accepted they feel by family and peers (Motoyoshi, 1990).

Previous literature has demonstrated that racial identity invalidation can come both from within and from outside one’s own ethnic/racial group(s), as multiracial

individuals have reported both being rejected by those with whom they share an ethnic/racial group as well as being invalidated by people with whom they do not share an ethnic/racial group (Bettez, 2010; Franco & O'Brien, 2018; Gilbert, 2005). Possible forms of identity invalidation from an outgroup source include outgroup members not believing one's ethnic/racial identity, assuming that a multiracial person is not related to their family members due to differences in appearance, or others talking negatively about a particular ethnic/racial group because they are unaware that a person is multiracial and/or assume that they do not belong to that ethnic/racial group (Bettez, 2010). When racial identity invalidation comes from an ingroup source, it can include rejection from one's ethnic/racial group for not being "\_\_\_\_\_ enough," exclusion from one's extended family for not being fully of that ethnic/racial group, and pressure to "prove oneself" as a part of an ethnic/racial group through behavior, cultural knowledge, and/or language ability (Bettez, 2010; Franco & O'Brien, 2018; Motoyoshi, 1990).

### **Multiple Bases of Multiracial Identity**

Although research into the identity development of multiracial individuals is still a relatively new, small, and mostly qualitative field, previous studies have found that multiracial identity can be fluid and vary depending on the immediate context and over time (Albuja, Sanchez, & Gaither, 2018; Davenport, 2016; Franco & O'Brien, 2018; Gilbert, 2005; Harris & Sim, 2002; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Pew Research Center, 2015; Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). Silvia Bettez (2010) discussed how many of the college-aged multiracial women that she interviewed shift how they present themselves in different situations, such as how they identified their ethnic/racial group on



professional forms versus when around friends. Some stated that they present themselves a certain way when around peers in order to “fit in” with certain racial groups and gain acceptance from ingroup members, while also reporting their racial identity another way on professional forms in order to take advantage of certain racial group privileges, such as scholarships (Bettez, 2010). Kristen A. Renn (2000) also found that many of her college-aged multiracial participants reported that they identified with more than one pattern of multiracial identity, and that more than half of the multiracial students that she surveyed (58%) identified situationally, shifting their identification and presentation in different environments in order to “fit in,” gain acceptance, and/or feel more welcome around monoracial peers. Participants that reported identifying situationally also reported identifying with more than one racial pattern, including identifying with two or more monoracial groups (“I am \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_”), identifying with one monoracial group (“I am \_\_\_\_”), or identifying with a multiracial identity (“I am mixed.”) (Renn, 2000). This indicates that multiracial individuals have multiple bases of identity that they can shift depending on the situation, and that multiracial individuals may identify more strongly with one basis than another. When identification with a group is strong, that identity forms a strong basis of self-evaluation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Threats to cherished identities are harmful to well-being and, as established earlier, identity invalidation is harmful to self-perception, self-esteem, and group identification (Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Coleman & Carter, 2007; Franco & O’Brien, 2018; Motoyoshi, 1990; Nishimura, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009). Since multiracial individuals have multiple bases of identity that can be threatened, threats to

stronger bases of identity should be more harmful to well-being and group identification than threats to less important bases of identity.

### **Rejection-Identification Model**

As mentioned previously, racial identity invalidation has been found to be harmful to psychological well-being and group identification (Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Coleman & Carter, 2007; Franco & O'Brien, 2018; Nishimura, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009). If invalidation from an ingroup member may be especially harmful to well-being, then it may also be especially harmful to racial group identification. For example, the rejection-identification model found that enhanced ingroup identification buffered the negative effects of outgroup discrimination on well-being because increasing group identification (and therefore a sense of belonging) is beneficial to well-being (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Cronin, Levin, Branscombe, van Laar, & Tropp, 2012; Jetten, Branscombe, Schmitt, & Spears, 2001). Although discrimination by an outgroup member harmed individuals' well-being, it also increased group identification, which increased well-being. The Cronin et al. (2012) study found that over a period of several years, Latinx college students who experienced perceived discrimination from an outgroup member reported higher group identification. The positive effects of this increased group identification acted as a buffer for the negative effects of discrimination. However, they did not explore the effects of rejection by an ingroup member. Previous research has found that rejection by an ingroup member may be especially damaging to well-being and group identification (Badea, Jetten, Iyer, & Er-rafiy, 2011; Motoyoshi, 1990). Rejection by ingroup members may be

especially harmful to well-being because it reduces rather than enhances group identification, which then further harms well-being. If an ingroup member rejected a multiracial individual, then there would be no possibility of using increased identification with that group as a buffer. Therefore, rejection from an ingroup member may lead to more negative effects than discrimination from an outgroup member. Additionally, if outgroup discrimination can increase identification with one's ingroup, then ingroup rejection should decrease identification with one's ingroup. This decreased identification with one's ingroup would in turn damage well-being, since a threat to an individual's sense of belonging is damaging to well-being (Franco & O'Brien, 2018; Motoyoshi, 1990; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). As mentioned earlier, threats to stronger bases of identity are expected to be more harmful to well-being and group identification than threats to less important bases of identity.

### **Hypotheses**

Previous research has established the negative consequences of experiencing racial identity invalidation and that multiracial individuals' racial identity can fluctuate depending on the immediate social context. However, no previous studies have examined how the consequences of identity invalidation may change depending on the source of and basis of invalidation. The present study aims to expand upon these findings by examining the specifics of whether or not the source of and basis of racial identity invalidation matter to the amount of psychological distress that multiracial individuals experience and the extent to which they identify with their racial group(s). Understanding the impacts of the source and basis of racial identity invalidation is important to the field

of multiracial studies because racial identity invalidation is one of the strongest racial stressors that multiracial people experience, and these impacts of are potentially important factors that previous literature has not examined. Examining the effects of who does the invalidating could reveal who has influence over multiracial group identification and well-being, and examining the effects of which identity is invalidated could explain which identities are most affected by invalidation. Considering the previous literature presented above, the two main hypotheses of the present study are as follows:

1. Participants will report higher levels of distress when their identity is invalidated by an Ingroup member versus an Outgroup member. They will also report higher levels of distress when their strongest racial identity is invalidated versus their second strongest racial identity, especially when the source of racial identity invalidation is an Ingroup member.
2. Participants will report lower identification with their strongest racial identity when it is invalidated by an Ingroup member versus an Outgroup member. They will also report lower identification with their strongest racial identity when it is invalidated versus their second strongest racial identity, especially when the source of racial identity invalidation is an Ingroup member.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited through Facebook and word of mouth to participate in this 10-15 minute study, with the possibility of winning a \$50 Amazon gift card. We

recruited 236 participants total. In order to remain in the analyses, participants were required to fulfill the following four eligibility criteria:

1. The survey must be completed, so that the participant's IP address could be recorded.
2. The participant's IP address must be located in the U. S., to indicate that the participant understood U.S. racial constructs.
3. The participant must select multiple racial identities in the Demographics section, to ensure that the participant is multiracial and therefore has several different bases of identity and racial ingroups.
4. The participant must pass the Source and Basis manipulation checks, to ensure that they were paying attention to the scenarios and that the manipulation was successful (see below).

Of the 236 responses, only 65 were used in analyses: 58 responses were removed because they were unfinished and therefore did not record the IP address, 33 responses were removed because the IP address was located outside of the U.S., 21 responses were removed because the participant only selected one racial background (and therefore was not considered multiracial), and 59 responses were removed because the participant failed the manipulation checks. Of the 65 participants whose data was used in the 2x2 mixed factorial design, the age ranged from 18-38 with a mean age of 21.3 ( $SD = 2.99$ ). The majority of the sample was female (86%), 12% was male, and 1.5% was nonbinary. The largest multiracial group was Asian/Caucasian mixed (55%). The smaller multiracial groups were Black/Caucasian mixed (9%), Latinx/Caucasian mixed (6%), and

Asian/Caucasian/Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander mixed (6%). Various other racial mixes comprised the remaining 24% of participants.

## **Design**

The present study is a 2 (between-subjects source of identity invalidation: Ingroup A vs. Unspecified Outgroup) x 2 (within-subjects basis of identity invalidation: Racial Identity A vs. Racial Identity B) mixed factorial design. Individuals' strongest racial identity is referred to as Racial Identity A; their second strongest racial identity is referred to as Racial Identity B. Participants were randomly assigned to one source of racial identity invalidation condition. 31 participants were assigned to the Ingroup A condition, and 33 were assigned to the Unspecified Outgroup condition. All participants experienced both basis of invalidation conditions. Participants in the Ingroup A source condition were assigned to be invalidated by a member of the racial ingroup with which they most strongly identified. This information was collected in the Demographics section of the survey (see below). Participants in the Unspecified Outgroup source condition were assigned to be invalidated by a person whose racial background was unspecified, but who was described as someone who did not share any racial group with the participant. The manipulations of the source and basis of racial identity invalidation were used to evaluate effects on participants' levels of psychological distress and identification with their strongest racial identity (Racial Identity A) after reading each of two scenarios in which they were asked to imagine their racial identities being invalidated.

### Procedure & Measures

This study used an online Qualtrics survey that included demographic questions, two experimental scenarios, a series of manipulation checks, a series of outcome measures, and a debriefing section. The full survey can be found in Appendix A. First, participants responded to a standard set of demographic questions. In this section, participants were asked to indicate their age, gender, racial background, religion, socioeconomic status, and political affiliation. After selecting the group(s) with which they identify, participants were then asked to rate the degree to which they identify with the group(s) on a scale from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Very much*). Identification questions for groups other than race were used to distract participants from the purpose of the study. In order to determine which racial identities were the strongest (Racial Identity A) and second strongest (Racial Identity B), participants were asked to indicate which racial groups they identify with the most strongly (classified as Racial Identity A) and second most strongly (classified as Racial Identity B). Participants then rated the extent to which they identified with each of those two racial groups on a 7-point Likert scale (1= *Not at all*, 7= *Very much*). Identification with Racial Identity A was used as a baseline measure of Racial Identification A in the ANCOVAS below.

Following the demographics section, participants were presented with a transition message that stated:

You will now be asked to imagine and react to two scenarios involving two of your identities that you specified in the Demographics section. Please pay attention and read each scenario **CAREFULLY**, as you will be asked to answer questions about the details of each scenario.

Following this message, participants read two invalidation scenarios based on the behavioral and phenotype invalidation sections of the Racial Identity Invalidation scale (Franco & O'Brien, 2018) in a randomized order. One scenario invalidated Racial Identity A (strongest identity indicated on the racial group identification scales) and the other scenario invalidated Racial Identity B (participants' second strongest racial identity). For the complete Racial Identity Invalidation scale (not used in the current study, but used to construct the racial identity invalidation scenarios), please refer to Appendix B. Between participants, the scenarios differed based on the racial group membership of the source of invalidation (Ingroup A vs. Unspecified Outgroup). The Ingroup A scenarios were matched to the racial identities of the participant, so that the source of invalidation was always a member of the participant's strongest racial ingroup. The Unspecified Outgroup scenarios did not specify the racial group membership of the source of invalidation, but did state that the source of invalidation did not share any racial group(s) with the participant. Although the scenarios were specific to the individual participant based on their racial background, they followed a common template and only differed in the source and basis of identity invalidation to match the identity of the individual. For example, a Black/Caucasian mixed-race participant in the Ingroup A Source condition could have been presented with the following scenario if they had chosen Black as their strongest racial identity (Racial Identity A):

Imagine you are waiting in line by yourself at the store when the friendly person beside you strikes up a pleasant conversation. After talking for a few minutes, they curiously ask what your racial background is. You tell them the same background that you indicated earlier in this survey. When you tell them, they



seem surprised. “Really? I never would have guessed,” they respond. “You don’t look or sound Black at all. Are you really Black?” Although they did not mention their own racial background, you can tell that this person is Black.

In this example, the participant had been assigned to the Ingroup A source condition and their Black identity had been selected as their strongest racial identity in the demographics section, which is why a Black person is the Ingroup A source. In the other scenario that this participant would respond to, the participant’s Caucasian identity would be invalidated by the same Black Ingroup A source. If this participant had been assigned to the Unspecified Outgroup condition, they would have read the exact same scenarios with the exception of the last line, which would have been changed to: You cannot tell what this person’s racial background is, but they do not seem to share any racial group with you. Both scenario templates for the Ingroup A and Unspecified Outgroup conditions can be found in Appendix C.

Following each scenario, participants completed one attention check and three manipulation checks. The attention check was a question about who the participant was talking to in the scenario (Stranger). The manipulation checks asked what the person’s racial background was (Either Racial Identity A [Ingroup A Source condition] or Could not tell [Unspecified Outgroup condition]), whether this person accepted or questioned the participants’ racial background (Questioned), and which racial background the person accepted/questioned (Either Racial Identity A [First Scenario: Racial Identity A] or Racial Identity B [Second Scenario: Racial Identity B]). We did not exclude the one participant who only failed the attention check because the wording of the scenario was somewhat unclear about whether the source of invalidation was a stranger or a friend.

However, we did exclude 59 participants who failed the manipulation checks. All participants who failed the Source manipulation check (i.e. what the person's racial background was) were excluded from analyses. The two Basis manipulation checks (i.e. whether the person accepted or questioned the participants' racial background and which racial background the person accepted/questioned) had two possible correct answers: If the participant answered 'Questioned' to the first Basis manipulation check, then they had to answer the second manipulation check with the identity that was invalidated in the scenario for their answers to be correct (Either Racial Identity A [First Scenario: Racial Identity A] or Racial Identity B [Second Scenario: Racial Identity B]). However, if a person invalidates one identity, then some participants interpreted this to mean that the person accepted the other identity. Therefore, we also considered responses to be correct if a participant answered 'Accepted' for the first Basis manipulation check and answered the second Basis manipulation check with the identity that was not invalidated (Either Racial Identity B [First Scenario: Racial Identity A] or Racial Identity A [Second Scenario: Racial Identity B]). Participants who failed either of the Basis manipulation checks on one or both scenarios were excluded from analyses.

After these checks, participants responded to a series of outcome measures. First, participants responded to a series of racial group identification questions regarding both Racial Identity A and Racial Identity B. These items consist of the questions: "How close do you feel to other (Racial Identity A/B) people?" (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Very much*), and "How strongly do you identify with other (Racial Identity A/B) people?" (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Very much*). The order of these questions were randomized across participants.

Scores on the two Racial Identification A questions were averaged to create the Racial Identification A scale.

Additionally, after each scenario, participants responded to a series of psychological distress questions from the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Eight of the original twenty items on the PANAS were selected to include in this survey. To see the full PANAS scale with all original 20 items, please refer to Appendix D. Specifically, participants were asked, “Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel: Distressed, Upset, Hostile, Ashamed, Excited, Enthusiastic, Proud, and Inspired.” Participants responded to the same measures for both scenarios in the same order (Racial group identification scales first, then psychological distress measure second). The items in each measure were randomized across scenarios and participants. Participants responded to these items on a scale from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Very Much*). Scores on the last four items (Excited, Enthusiastic, Proud, and Inspired) were reverse-coded, so that lower scores indicate greater distress. Scores were averaged to create a single Distress scale. After reading both scenarios and responding to the outcome measures, participants were presented with a debriefing section to inform them of the goals and purpose of the study.

## **Results**

We conducted two analyses using analysis of variance and analysis of covariance. Assumptions were checked to ensure that these analyses were appropriate, and no assumptions were violated. Based on skewness and kurtosis values, there was no

deviation from normality in the dependent measures. Additionally, Levene's test of homogeneity of variance demonstrated that each group had equivalent variance estimates.

### **Distress**

A 2 x 2 (Source of Invalidation [ingroup A, unspecified outgroup] x Basis of Invalidation [racial identity A, racial identity B]) mixed factorial analysis of variance was conducted to determine how Psychological Distress was influenced by the source of and basis of racial identity invalidation. Contrary to Hypothesis 1, there was no main effect of Source of Invalidation on Distress,  $F(1, 61) = 1.10, p = .30, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . However, as expected, there was a statistically significant main effect of Basis of Invalidation on Distress,  $F(1, 61) = 6.44, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .10$ . This main effect indicated that participants reported higher levels of Distress when their strongest racial identity (Racial Identity A) was invalidated ( $M = 4.82, SD = .87$ ) versus their second strongest racial identity (Racial Identity B) ( $M = 4.44, SD = 1.11$ ).

Also as expected, this main effect was qualified by a statistically significant interaction between the Source of and Basis of Invalidation on Distress,  $F(1, 61) = 4.17, p = .05, \eta_p^2 = .06$ . To elaborate on this interaction effect, the simple main effects of Basis of Invalidation for each level of Source of Invalidation were tested. When the Source of Invalidation was an unspecified outgroup member, the Basis of Invalidation had no significant effect on the participant's reported level of Distress,  $F(1, 61) = 0.12, p = .73, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . However, when the Source of Invalidation was an ingroup member that shared the participants' strongest racial identity, participants reported higher levels of Distress when the Basis of Invalidation was Racial Identity A versus when the Basis of

Invalidation was Racial Identity B,  $F(1, 61) = 11.01, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .15$ . Means and standard deviations of these conditions are presented in Table 1 and graphed in Figure 1.

Table 1

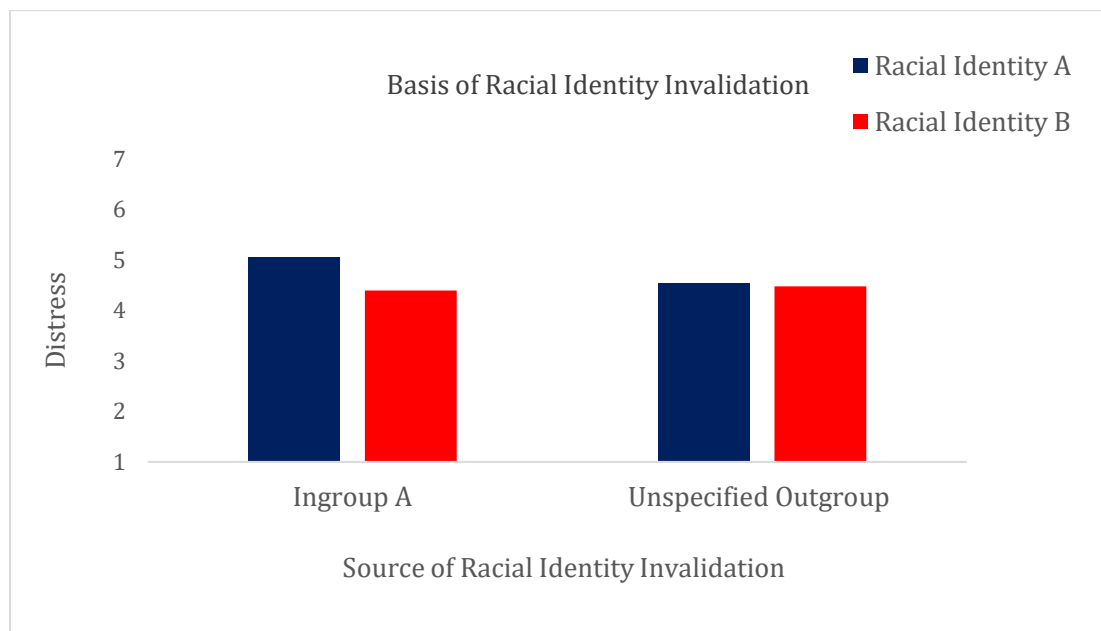
*Means and Standard Deviations of Distress across Source and Basis of Invalidation Conditions*

|                      | Racial Identity A    | Racial Identity B    |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Ingroup A            | 5.06 ( <b>0.85</b> ) | 4.40 ( <b>1.22</b> ) |
| Unspecified Outgroup | 4.55 ( <b>0.83</b> ) | 4.48 ( <b>0.98</b> ) |

*Note.* Standard Deviations are presented in boldface and in parentheses.

Figure 1

*The Interaction between Source of Invalidation and Basis of Invalidation on Distress*



### **Racial Identification A**

A 2 x 2 (Source of Invalidation [ingroup A, unspecified outgroup] x Basis of Invalidation [racial identity A, racial identity B]) mixed factorial analysis of covariance was conducted to determine how identification with one's strongest racial identity (Racial Identity A) was influenced by the Source of Invalidation and the Basis of Invalidation while controlling for participants' level of identification with Racial Identity A at baseline. The analysis of covariance indicated that, contrary to Hypothesis 2, there were no main effects of either the Source of Invalidation,  $F(1, 61) = 3.64, p = .06, \eta_p^2 = .06$  or the Basis of Invalidation,  $F(1, 61) = 0.16, p = .67, \eta_p^2 = .003$  on identification with Racial Identity A when baseline identification with controlled. However, as expected, there was a statistically significant interaction between the Source of and Basis of Invalidation,  $F(1, 61) = 5.11, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .08$ .

This significant interaction was further investigated by analyzing the simple main effects of Basis of Invalidation for each level of Source of Invalidation. When the Source of Invalidation was an unspecified outgroup member, the Basis of Invalidation had no significant effect on the participant's identification with Racial Identity A,  $F(1, 61) = 0.04, p = .85, \eta_p^2 = .001$ . However, when the Source of Invalidation was an ingroup member who shared the participants' strongest racial identity, participants reported lower identification with Racial Identity A when the Basis of Invalidation was Racial Identity A versus when the Basis of Invalidation was Racial Identity B,  $F(1, 61) = 9.36, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .13$ . Means and standard deviations of these conditions are presented in Table 2 and graphed in Figure 2.

Table 2

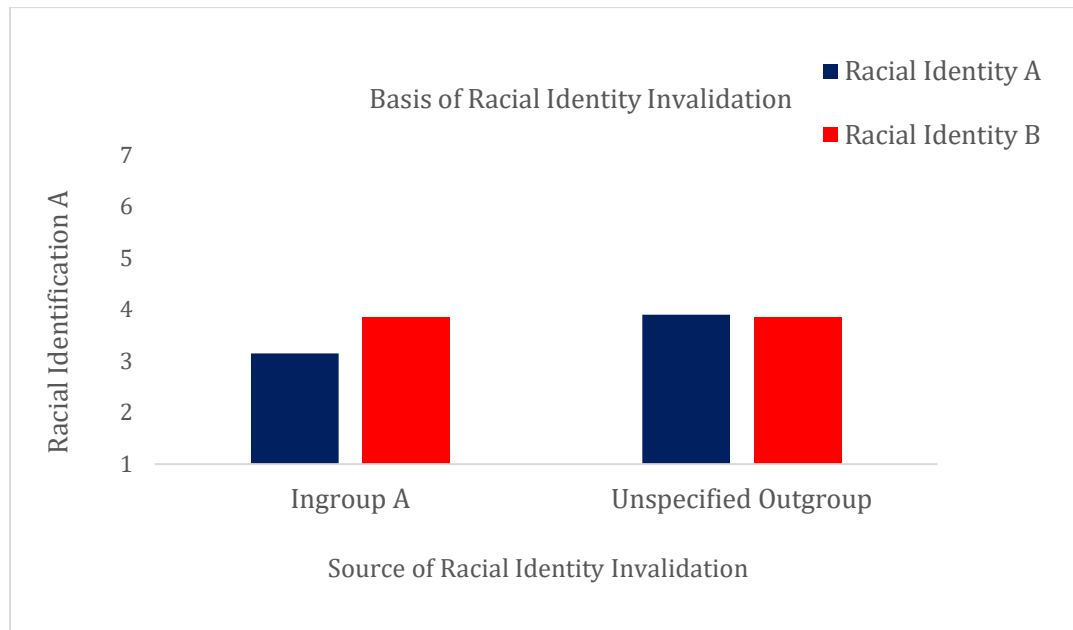
*Means and Standard Deviations of Identification with Racial Identity A across Source and Basis of Invalidation Conditions*

|                      | Racial Identity A    | Racial Identity B    |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Ingroup A            | 3.15 ( <b>1.27</b> ) | 3.85 ( <b>1.54</b> ) |
| Unspecified Outgroup | 3.90 ( <b>1.39</b> ) | 3.85 ( <b>1.50</b> ) |

*Note.* Standard Deviations are presented in boldface and in parentheses.

Figure 2

*The Interaction between Source of Invalidation and Basis of Invalidation on Identification with Racial Identity A*



### Discussion

The present study had two main predictions. First, we predicted that participants in the Ingroup A and Unspecified Outgroup conditions would report higher distress when their strongest racial identity (Racial Identity A) was invalidated versus their second strongest racial identity (Racial Identity B), especially when the source of invalidation was an ingroup member that shared the participants' strongest racial identity. Second, we predicted that participants would report lower identification with their strongest racial identity (Racial Identity A) when it was invalidated by an ingroup member versus an outgroup member. We also predicted lower identification with their strongest racial identity (Racial Identity A) when Racial Identity A was invalidated versus Racial Identity B, especially when the source of invalidation was an ingroup member that shared the participants' strongest racial identity. These hypotheses were at least partially supported, as the analyses showed that multiracial participants only reported higher levels of distress and lower identification with Racial Identity A when Racial Identity A was invalidated by an Ingroup member of that same racial group.

Distress may be particularly high when an ingroup member invalidates a shared basis of identity because members of the same racial group(s) as multiracial individuals have more power over the individuals' sense of belonging with that racial group, and are therefore able to incite negative consequences while outgroup members are not. For example, some multiracial interviewees reported being especially hurt when rejected by family on the basis of their mixed heritage because it made them feel like "outsiders" and as though they had less claim to their parents' cultures than their monoracial cousins. (Bettez, 2010). Interviewees also reported feeling confused and distressed when rejected



by ingroup members from racial groups that they identified with, as it made them feel isolated and as though there was no place that they belonged (Bettez, 2010; Motoyoshi, 1990). Multiracial individuals who find themselves excluded by ingroup members from racial groups with whom they might identify report a sense of racial homelessness, meaning that they do not feel belonging with any racial group and/or that they lack a sense of identity (Franco & O'Brien). Although the present study used a stranger as the source of invalidation (rather than a friend or family member), the same process may be at work, such that rejection from an ingroup member may alienate multiracial individuals from their racial group(s) and lead to a sense of racial homelessness while invalidation from an outgroup member does not have the same power of exclusion. Future research may examine whether the closeness of the ingroup source of invalidation matters to multiracial individuals. The present study used a stranger in the invalidation scenarios, but based on previous literature, the results may be more extreme if the ingroup source was a friend or family member (Bettez, 2010; Motoyoshi, 1990).

Racial identification was also particularly low when an ingroup member invalidated the shared racial identity. According to the Rejection-Identification model discussed in Cronin et al. (2012), the negative effects of experiencing discrimination by an outgroup can be buffered by the positive effects of increased identification with one's ingroup (Branscombe et al., 1999; Cronin et al., 2012; Jetten et al., 2001). In this original study, over a period of several years, Latinx youths reported increased identification with their ethnic group in response to experiencing outgroup discrimination towards their ethnic ingroup, which helped buffer the negative effects of the discrimination they experienced from outgroup members on their well-being. Although the present study did

not find any increase in identification with Racial Identity A when the source of invalidation was an outgroup member, a possible reason why racial identity invalidation from an ingroup member that shares the participant's strongest racial identity is so damaging is because it removes any possible buffer of increased identification with that group. That is, instead of increasing identification with that shared racial group, racial identity invalidation from an ingroup member actually decreases identification with that shared racial group, and this may explain why ingroup invalidation on the basis of a shared identity increases distress. Future research may fruitfully examine the link between racial group identification and distress in multiracial individuals, since a change in racial group identification may be a predictor of a change in distress (Cronin et al., 2012).

Outgroups can make ingroups feel inferior, and thus harm their wellbeing. However, outgroups cannot exclude individuals from ingroup membership as effectively. Identity invalidation, by contrast, excludes an individual from a desired ingroup membership. As discussed previously, racial identity invalidation from an ingroup member may have negative consequences because the ingroup member has the authority to reject the individual from that racial group, creating a sense of racial homelessness, and there is no buffer available to soften these negative effects. Outgroup members have no such power to exclude multiracial individuals from any racial group, which may be why the present study did not find any change in identification with one's racial group or distress when the source of invalidation was an outgroup member.

One limitation in the present study is that several participants' failed the attention check. Upon further inspection, the attention check question may have been confusing to

participants due to the wording, which is perhaps why some people failed to give the correct answer. Specifically, the attention check asked participants to select who they had been speaking to (a friend or stranger). However, the scenario did not explicitly state whether the person was a stranger or friend; rather, participants were asked to imagine that they were by themselves when a “friendly person” started speaking to them. While it is possible that, due to the unclear wording, some participants answered the attention check incorrectly even though they were paying attention, only one participant who answered the attention check incorrectly also answered the manipulation checks correctly. The other twelve participants who answered the attention check incorrectly either did not finish the study or did not answer the manipulation checks correctly.

Additionally, although we expected participants to respond that the identity mentioned in the scenario was questioned, some participants interpreted the scenario as accepting the identity that was not mentioned. This answer also makes logical sense (i.e. if a person denies only one of my identities, then they are accepting my other identities). However, we did exclude participants who failed the manipulation check of the source of invalidation and those who did not answer both basis of invalidation questions correctly. One reason why so many participants may have failed the manipulation checks is because when the racial background of the source of invalidation was unspecified, many participants assumed the person to be Caucasian (even though the scenario stated that they did not seem to share ANY racial group with the participant). Future researchers should adjust the scenarios in the Unspecified Outgroup condition to explicitly state the racial group(s) that the source of invalidation does not share with the participant. For example, if the participant is Black/Caucasian mixed, then the scenario should clearly

state that the source of invalidation is not Black or Caucasian. Another reason that so many participants failed the attention and manipulation checks could have been because the survey was administered online via Qualtrics; there may have been an online attention deficit associated with taking the survey on a computer or mobile device.

Another limitation of the present study was that, as a conservative measure, we excluded participants whose IP addresses were located outside of the U.S. Therefore, we may have excluded participants who had lived in the U.S. but whose IP addresses were located abroad. We also may have inadvertently included people whose IP addresses were located in the U.S. but who did not actually live in the U.S. or have familiarity with U.S. ethnic/racial constructs. Since so many participants were excluded from data analyses due to foreign IP addresses and failed manipulation checks, the smaller sample size may have led to a reduction in power of the analyses. Future researchers should resolve these issues by asking participants the length of time that they have been in the U.S., in order to ensure that they understand U.S. ethnic/racial constructs.

Finally, because most of the participants were Asian/Caucasian mixed women (52%) and relatively young, the present study may not be generalizable to the general American multiracial population. This may have affected the results because previous studies have shown that Black/Caucasian mixed individuals may be more likely to be defined by their minority race than by a multiracial identity like Asian/Caucasian mixed individuals. Asian/Caucasian mixed individuals are more likely to claim a biracial identity (as opposed to a monoracial identity) than Black/Caucasian mixed individuals or Latinx/Caucasian individuals (Franco & O'Brien, 2018; Harris & Sim, 2002; Lee & Bean, 2004; Townsend, Fryberg, Wilkins, & Markus, 2012). As such, Asian/Caucasian

mixed individuals may be more identifiable as “different” from their monoracial peers (Franco & O’Brien, 2018; Herman, 2010; Ho, Sidanius, Levin, & Banaji, 2011) and therefore more subject to racial identity invalidation by their monoracial peers. Future researchers should examine these differences in more detail, and study whether there are racial group differences in who is most affected by racial identity invalidation from an ingroup source and why.

In conclusion, the findings of the present study are in line with previous research, which shows that racial identity invalidation can have negative effects on the psychological health and racial identity of multiracial individuals. However, the present study expands upon past research by further investigating the specifics of who does the most damage when they invalidate a multiracial person’s identity, and which identity is the most susceptible to damage when invalidated. We found that it is not necessarily the source of or basis of racial identity invalidation that matters, but rather the interaction between them. Multiracial individuals seem to experience the most distress and alienation from a racial group when a racial ingroup member invalidates their shared basis of identity. The implications of the present study are important to future research in the expanding field of multiracial studies because they elaborate on previous findings and allow us to better understand the complex identities and experiences of multiracial individuals. Additionally, these findings have important implications for informing the education and identity development of multiracial children, as they indicate that experiencing identity invalidation from ingroup members (with whom one shares a racial identity) may be particularly damaging. As the field is able to better understand the complex identity development of multiracial individuals and the negative effects of

identity invalidation on psychological well-being, we may be able to build a better environment for the fastest-growing racial group in America.

Appendix A  
Final Survey

**Demographics**

**Age:** \_\_\_\_

**Gender:**

Male

Female

Nonbinary

Other (Please Specify): \_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

How strongly do you identify with your gender?

(1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

**Racial Background:**

Please select all that apply

Asian \_\_\_\_

Black \_\_\_\_

Caucasian \_\_\_\_

Middle Eastern \_\_\_\_

Latinx \_\_\_\_

Native American \_\_\_\_

Other (Please Specify): \_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

(If more than 1 racial background is selected): To what extent do you identify as mixed-race?

(1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

Which racial background do you identify most strongly with?

(Selected racial backgrounds will be listed as possible answer choices)

To what extent do you identify with this racial group?

(1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

Which racial background do you identify second most strongly with?

(Selected racial backgrounds will be listed as possible answer choices)

To what extent do you identify with this racial group?

(1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

**Religion:**

Christian/Catholic \_\_\_\_

Jewish \_\_\_\_\_  
Buddhist \_\_\_\_\_  
Hindu \_\_\_\_\_  
Muslim \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (Please Specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
Prefer not to answer

How strongly do you identify with your religious group?  
(1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

**Socioeconomic Status:**

Upper Socioeconomic Class \_\_\_\_\_  
Upper Middle Socioeconomic Class \_\_\_\_\_  
Middle Socioeconomic Class \_\_\_\_\_  
Lower Middle Socioeconomic Class \_\_\_\_\_  
Lower Socioeconomic Class \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (Please Specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
Prefer not to answer

How strongly do you identify with your socioeconomic group?  
(1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

**Political Affiliation:**

Democrat \_\_\_\_\_  
Republican \_\_\_\_\_  
Libertarian \_\_\_\_\_  
Independent \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (Please Specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
Prefer not to answer

How strongly do you identify with your political affiliation?  
(1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

**Transition**

You will now be asked to imagine and react to two scenarios involving two of your identities that you specified in the Demographics section. Please pay attention and read each scenario **CAREFULLY**, as you will be asked to answer questions about the details of each scenario.



### Scenarios

#### **Racial Identity A Scenario:**

Imagine you are waiting in line by yourself at the store when the friendly person beside you strikes up a pleasant conversation. After talking for a few minutes, they curiously ask what your racial background is. You tell them the same background that you indicated earlier in this survey. When you tell them, they seem surprised. “Really? I never would have guessed,” they respond. “You don’t look or sound [Racial Identity A] at all. Are you really [Racial Identity A]?” **Ingroup A Condition:** Although they did not mention their own racial background, you can tell that this person is [Ingroup A (strongest racial identity)]. **Unspecified Outgroup Condition:** You cannot tell what this person’s racial background is, but they do not seem to share any racial group with you.

#### **Attention Check**

Who were you talking to?

1. Stranger
2. Friend
3. Don’t Know

#### **Manipulation Checks**

What was this person’s racial background?

1. Racial Identity A
2. Racial Identity B
3. Could not tell

Did this person accept or question your racial background?

1. Accept
2. Question
3. No mention of my racial background

Which racial identity did this person accept/question?

1. Racial Identity A
2. Racial Identity B
3. No mention of my racial identity

**Racial Identity Scale: (Randomized)**

Racial Identity A

Immediately following this situation, how close do you feel to other (Racial Identity A) people? (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

Immediately following this situation, how strongly do you identify with other (Racial Identity A) people? (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

Racial Identity B

Immediately following this situation, how close do you feel to other (Racial Identity B) people? (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

Immediately following this situation, how strongly do you identify with other (Racial Identity B) people? (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

**PANAS Scale: (Randomized)** (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

(Negative)

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Distressed

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Upset

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Hostile

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Ashamed

(Positive)

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Excited

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Proud

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Enthusiastic

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Inspired

**Racial Identity B Scenario: Note- Source will be the same as Racial Identity A Scenario**

This time, imagine yourself in the same scenario but with **ONE** key difference.

You are waiting in line by yourself at the store when the friendly person beside you strikes up a pleasant conversation. After talking for a few minutes, they curiously ask what your racial background is. You tell them the same background that you indicated earlier in this survey. When you tell them, they seem surprised. “Really? I never would have guessed,” they respond. “You don’t look or sound [Racial Identity B] at all. Are you really [Racial Identity B]?” **Ingroup A Condition:** Although they did not mention their own racial background, you can tell that this person is [Ingroup A (strongest racial identity)]. **Unspecified Outgroup Condition:** You cannot tell what this person’s racial background is, but they do not seem to share any racial group with you.

**Attention Check**

Who were you talking to?

1. Stranger
2. Friend
3. Don't Know

**Manipulation Checks**

What was this person's racial background?

1. Racial Identity A
2. Racial Identity B
3. Could not tell

Did this person accept or question your racial background?

1. Accept
2. Question
3. No mention of my racial background

Which racial identity did this person accept/question?

1. Racial Identity A
2. Racial Identity B
3. No mention of my racial identity

**Racial Identity Scale: (Randomized)**Racial Identity A

Immediately following this situation, how close do you feel to other (Racial Identity A) people? (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

Immediately following this situation, how strongly do you identify with other (Racial Identity A) people? (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

Racial Identity B

Immediately following this situation, how close do you feel to other (Racial Identity B) people? (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

Immediately following this situation, how strongly do you identify with other (Racial Identity B) people? (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

**PANAS Scale: (Randomized)** (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*)

(Negative)

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Distressed

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Upset

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Hostile

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Ashamed

(Positive)

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Excited

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Proud

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Enthusiastic

Immediately following this situation, please rate the level to which you feel Inspired

Appendix B  
Identity Invalidation Scale - Franco & O'Brien, 2018

(1 = *never*, 6 = *almost always*)

**Factor 1: Behavioral Invalidation**

1. Because of the way I speak, others deny my racial group membership(s).
2. I am excluded from a racial group that I feel connected to because I do not “behave” like a typical member of that racial group.
3. Others think that my interests are different than those of a typical member of my racial group(s).
4. When people hear my opinions, they make me feel like I do not belong in my racial group(s).

**Factor 2: Phenotype Invalidation**

5. Others would not guess the race(s) that I identify with.
6. People have reacted with surprise when I tell them the race(s) that I identify with.
7. My physical features (e.g., skin color, hair texture, eye shape, eye color) lead people to assume that I am not the race(s) that I perceive myself as.
8. People assume I am not a member of the racial group(s) that I identify with.

**Factor 3: Identity Incongruent Discrimination**

9. Others call me racially-derogatory words that do not apply to the racial group(s) that I identify with.
10. I am discriminated against based on a race that I do not identify with.
11. Others apply racial stereotypes to me that do not apply to the racial group(s) that I identify with.

12. People expect me to associate with members of a racial group that I do not identify with.

## Appendix C

## Scenario Templates

**Source: Ingroup A****Scenario 1: (Basis: Racial Identity A)**

Imagine you are waiting in line by yourself at the store when the friendly person beside you strikes up a pleasant conversation. After talking for a few minutes, they curiously ask what your racial background is. You tell them the same background that you indicated earlier in this survey. When you tell them, they seem surprised. “Really? I never would have guessed,” they respond. “You don’t look or sound [Racial Identity A] at all. Are you really [Racial Identity A]?” Although they did not mention their own racial background, you can tell that this person is [Ingroup A (strongest racial identity)].

**Scenario 2: (Basis: Racial Identity B)**

This time, imagine yourself in the same scenario but with **ONE** key difference. You are waiting in line by yourself at the store when the friendly person beside you strikes up a pleasant conversation. After talking for a few minutes, they curiously ask what your racial background is. You tell them the same background that you indicated earlier in this survey. When you tell them, they seem surprised. “Really? I never would have guessed,” they respond. “You don’t look or sound [Racial Identity B] at all. Are you really [Racial Identity B]?” Although they did not mention their own racial background, you can tell that this person is [Ingroup A (strongest racial identity)].



**Source: Unspecified Outgroup Condition****Scenario 1: (Basis: Racial Identity A)**

You are waiting in line by yourself at the store when the friendly person beside you strikes up a pleasant conversation. After talking for a few minutes, they curiously ask what your racial background is. You tell them the same background that you indicated earlier in this survey. When you tell them, they seem surprised. “Really? I never would have guessed,” they respond. “You don’t look or sound [Racial Identity A] at all. Are you really [Racial Identity A]?” You cannot tell what this person’s racial background is, but they do not seem to share any racial group with you.

**Scenario 2: (Basis: Racial Identity B)**

This time, imagine yourself in the same scenario but with **ONE** key difference. You are waiting in line by yourself at the store when the friendly person beside you strikes up a pleasant conversation. After talking for a few minutes, they curiously ask what your racial background is. You tell them the same background that you indicated earlier in this survey. When you tell them, they seem surprised. “Really? I never would have guessed,” they respond. “You don’t look or sound [Racial Identity B] at all. Are you really [Racial Identity B]?” You cannot tell what this person’s racial background is, but they do not seem to share any racial group with you.

## Appendix D

## Positive and Negative Affective Scale - Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions.

Read each item and then select how much you feel like this from the scale.

Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment.

(1 = *very slightly or not at all*, 5 = *extremely*)

1. Interested
2. Distressed
3. Excited
4. Upset
5. Strong
6. Guilty
7. Scared
8. Hostile
9. Enthusiastic
10. Proud
11. Irritable
12. Alert
13. Ashamed
14. Inspired
15. Nervous
16. Determined

17. Attentive

18. Jittery

19. Active

20. Afraid

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